

A Paladin, a Mage, and a Zoomer (oh my!) by ZJpotter

Series: [Friends Don't Lie](#) [4]

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M, Max's patented scream therapy

Language: English

Characters: Eleven | Jane Hopper, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Steve Harrington

Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper & Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler, Mike Wheeler & Maxine "Max" Mayfield

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-04-30

Updated: 2018-04-30

Packaged: 2022-04-22 04:43:04

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 2,419

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

One hour is a long time Mike decides. He doesn't know how long it's been or even how they're supposed to know when one hour has passed. Not like he has a watch.

Mike makes a frustrated noise, some high pitched hybrid of a scream and a groan, and that's when it all goes down hill.

Or the story of how El sticks to a promise and Mike makes a friend.

A Paladin, a Mage, and a Zoomer (oh my!)

Author's Note:

This is a sequel to "J-e-a-l-o-u-s-y" (but you don't have to read that to understand), but chronologically after "What's in a name?"

El's here.

She's here, beside him, right now even though she's supposed to be in hiding.

All of his thoughts are of El at the moment. He can't help it. She's drowning in the chief's coat, his hat slipping down her face like a lampshade. One of her hands is holding his and her free hand works to push the hat above her eyes. Her hair is curly. Who would have thought it would be curly? It's a nice kind of curly too. Or maybe that's just because it's El's. Everything about El is nice.

There's a noise somewhere to the left of him and Mike peers around El. Max is there, hands stuffed in the sleeves of her sweatshirt, kicking the leaves as she walks.

"What?"

Mike shrugs, "I forgot you were here."

"Thanks."

The hand that's holding El's lifts upward. El's eyebrows are all scrunched up, face contorted into concern. She turns her hand over in his, dragging her fingers over his. He can't really feel her hands which is probably a problem, but he doubts he's susceptible to frost bite yet. He hasn't been outside for that long.

"Cold," she says and looks to him for an explanation.

"Yeah, I forgot my gloves at home."

El frowns, "Bad."

"I'm fine, really," Mike says lowering his head to really look at her, "I'll be okay. I have pockets. See?"

He slips his hand out of her grip and place it into the pocket on the side of his jacket. El looks down at his hands and then nods, satisfied. Mike smiles when the hat slides down over her eyes at the motion.

"Get a room."

He looks over at Max who somehow looks more annoyed than she did before.

"I bet's fine when you and Lucas-"

"Lucas? I'm not- we're not-its different."

"How is it different?"

"We're not a thing Wheeler. We're not mushy and soft and gross." (They totally are.)

El pushes her lampshade hat up to look at Max, "A thing?"

"A thing! Together! Dating whatever you two are!"

Mike's cheeks color and El looks at him for clarification. He doesn't know what they are . They're friends. Who have kissed. Twice. Does that make them something? ThAt technically makes them something doesn't it? That made Nancy and Steve something. Oh gosh, this is making his head spin.

By the time he comes back to his senses, Max is still rambling.

"This is stupid! This whole thing is dumb! We're wandering in the woods, in the middle of December, for no reason!"

She's staring at El. She looks angry at El and his mouth speaks before his brain can catch up.

"Don't yell at her!"

"I'm not yelling at her, back off!"

"You back off!"

WHACK.

All three kids look ahead of them. Steve's panting, hands on his bat which is currently rammed in a tree. He yanks the bat out the tree and turns to them, looking over his sunglasses. (Mike decides Steve wearing sunglasses on a cloudy day is absolutely stupid.) Mike honestly had forgotten Steve was there. He'd dragged them out their houses and pulled them into the woods with no explanation. Yet he also brought him to El, so Mike is conflicted on where he stands with Steve at the moment.

"The yelling stops now," Steve says, "Seriously you're giving me a headache."

"He's being a jerk."

Mike rolls his eyes. Steve sighs and pinches his the bridge of his nose. He mutters something under his breath that Mike can't hear ,but desperately wants to.

"E-Jane." His sister's ex boyfriend says.

Right. They have to call her Jane in public now.

Jane. Mike recalls one night spent under El's fort in the basement. Everyone had gone upstairs, momentarily halting their DnD game for a chance of his mother's cookies. He had stayed behind, taking the opportunity to seize up his walkie-talkie and listen. For El. Only, she didn't answer again, and he came so very close to throwing his walkie at the wall if it weren't for Will coming down to get him. Somehow DnD had gone abandoned and they all just talked and ate cookies. It was nice really. They were trying to come up with names for El, names she might've had. They came up with Samantha, Beverly, Erin, and the ever-famous Eleanor just to name a few. Jane never made the list.

Jane seemed to suit her perfectly.

El looks at Steve and Steve gives her a pointed look. El nods.

"I know," she says, "Talk."

Steve nods this time and looks back at them, "All three of you need to work out your issues. Now. I'm not driving you anywhere if you're going to do that awkward ignoring thing, Dustin tells me about."

He swings his bag over his shoulder, gives them another glance and starts to walk away, "One hour!"

One hour is a long time Mike decides. He doesn't know how long it's been or even how they're supposed to know when one hour has passed. Not like he has a watch.

Max is sitting on a rock, poking dried leaves with a stick. El is standing somewhere near him, a pensive expression on her face. He wants to know what she's thinking about, but he doesn't. The silence is irritating, but it feels weird to break.

El does it for him.

"We need to talk."

Max looks up, "About what?"

El gestures between the three of them, "Issues."

Max snorts, "We don't have issues. We're fine."

"Not fine." El insists.

She walks over to Max, eyes full of determination. She takes a breath.

"I'm sorry."

It sits there for a while because Max doesn't say anything. El fiddles with her jacket zipper.

"I saw. At school. I made you fall. I was jea-jealous."

Max's eyes gradually widen as she processes the words. Mike's mouth falls open a bit.

He was right. She had been there then. Somehow she was there, that day when they were searching for Dart in the gym and Max was getting on his very last nerve. Max had fallen off her skateboard-called it some magnetic pull-and he knew. He knew who had done it but he didn't see.

"That was you?" Max stands up, "Were you spying on us?"

"Looking for Mike," El says and then adds with a bit of urgency, "Jealous."

She looks at Max and then at Mike and Mike immediately understands. She hadn't come in the gym, she didn't know what was happening and he could see how one could draw conclusions. Something in El's eyes makes her look ashamed she'd ever think that and Mike frowns.

"Wait, you mean to tell me you were jealous because you saw us together?" Max asks.

"Yes."

"You thought we liked each other?"

El says "Yes" a little softer this time. Max makes a disgusted face in Mike's direction. Mike simply rolls his eyes because El is still his attention. She still looks unsure and a little embarrassed so he crosses the space and stands right in front of El.

"You have nothing to worry about El," he says, "I don't like Max."

Really, he doesn't.

"I know," El says and then she looks at Max with all the sincerity she can muster, "Sorry. I was....mouthbreather. I want to be your friend."

She extends her hand and Max looks at it for a moment. It's almost the reverse of that night and he half-expects Max to brush right by her like El had done. Only she doesn't. Max narrows her eyes before softening her expression into something more soft and dare Mike say understanding. She takes El's hand and shakes it.

"May Mayfield."

"Jane Hopper." El fumbles around the name like she doesn't know what to call herself (she probably doesn't) and Max laughs at the face she makes.

"You'll get used to it."

El gives a small smile. Max turns to Mike and the harsh expression settles over her features once more.

"Jane did it, what about you?"

Mike raises an eyebrow.

"An apology?"

"I don't owe you any apologies," Mike said.

"Yes you do!"

"I thought you didn't want to be in our 'stupid party'?" Mike says.

"Of course I want to be in your stupid party!" Max steps closer, "All I wanted was some decent friends! You just don't like me because I'm not El! Well your mage is back! She's here Wheeler. So you can stop being such a jerk!"

Max looks up at him, challengingly, and Mike stares right back. His stare is probably less intimidating, but he hardly cares.

Max crosses her arms over her chest in that impatient way he's seen moms do when they're waiting for a response. He's seen his mom do it and Lucas' mom do it, he's even seen Mr. Clark do it and he's not even a mom. Seeing Max do it is a little unsettling.

Mike makes a frustrated noise, some high pitched hybrid of a scream and a groan, and that's when it all goes down hill.

Max snorts, "What was what?"

"What?"

"That sound," Max says and then repeats the sound, mocking him, "What was that?"

"That's not what I sound like."

"It is!" Max is grinning now.

El's trying not to smile and when Mike looks at her she adverts her gaze to the ground.

Max repeats the noise, louder this time.

"Shut up!" Mike says, but Max is too busy laughing to notice.

She does stop a few seconds later, mid laugh, and then she stands up straight and screams. Really screams. Screams like she's angry or afraid of something. A sound that comes all the way from her gut.

Mike thinks she's gone crazy.

The red-head stops and then looks at him, "Scream."

"What?"

"You'll feel a lot better," Max says, "Trust me. Just scream."

"We're in the middle of the-"

"Exactly. No one's around."

The idea is stupid. So very stupid and Mike can list off a hundred reasons why. Someone could hear them and call the cops. Calling the cops would mean calling Hopper which meant that he'd find them-find El outside the cabin. Or it would be some other cop who didn't know them and he'd find El. That's even worse than Hopper.

Except the rational part of him decides to take a backseat and Mike screams. He balls his fists up at his sides and screams louder than he can ever remember screaming.

Something inside of him, loosens up a bit.

It feels good. Really, really good.

El steps forward, curiosity painting her features. Mike nods his head towards Max.

"Try it," Max says.

So she does. Mike has to cover his ears because it's so loud. He briefly wonders if lights are flickering somewhere. El stops, sniffs a bit, and wipes her nose on Hopper's sleeve. Mike really hopes lights weren't flickering somewhere.

"Good," she says.

The thing in Mike's chest loosens when he screams again. He screams out Max, he screams out tunnels beneath the town, he screams out Mind-Players and Will, he screams out Nancy, and he screams out nearly a whole year's worth of fear and the horrible hole in his chest from El not being there.

It doesn't leave completely, but it lessens.

He hardly even notices that Max and El are screaming too. He does notice that Max starts laughing laughs that make her double over. El's smiling wide (he really loves that smile) and she's laughing too (he really loves that laugh) and Mike can't help but join in.

They fall on the ground, out of breath ,but still laughing. Mike has one hand wrapped around his stomach and it hurts to laugh, but he can't stop.

The sky is cloudy, the type of cloudy and gray that promises snow, when he looks up.

"This is stupid," Max says when her laughter dies down.

"What is?" Mike asks.

"Fighting," Max says, "It never solves anything."

"It doesn't," and Mike latches onto the peace treaty, "I'm sorry."

"An apology Wheeler?"

"I'm sorry for excluding you. I was-"

"Jealous?" El supplies.

"Jealous."

"I'm sorry too, I guess," Max says, "For ruining the flow of things."

"We needed you," Mike says a bit reluctantly, "You were the only one who could drive."

Max laughs.

"So am I in your stupid party now?"

"I thought you didn't want to be in our stupid party?" Mike says, teasing this time.

"I don't."

Mike rolls his eyes, "The party's a democracy. Everyone gets a vote. Lucas and Dustin and Will already gave their's so..."

He raises his left hand, right hand crossing over to cover his heart. He gives Max a look and she does the same.

"This is going to be nerd stuff isn't it?"

Mike ignores her, "I, Michael Wheeler, the Paladin, cast my vote for a new member to be entered into the party. Are there any objections?"

A bird squawks from one of the trees. Max glares, and gives the bird "the bird" in return. Mike clears his throat.

"Maxine Mayfield do you promise to abide by the rules of the party?"

"Sure?"

"You're supposed to say 'I do'."

"Fine, I do."

"Seeing as all other party members have approved," Mike offers a

small smile, "Welcome to the party Zoomer."

The Zoomer is by far the farthest thing from a real character (he'll have to discuss that with her later) but Max latches onto the olive branch with both hands.

"Thanks, Wheeler."

She punches him on the arm almost affectionately. (It definitely doesn't hurt.)

They stay on the ground until the cold starts to seep through their jackets and they help each other up. El's hand slips in his again and Max walks, but not so far away this time.

"Ready to lose again at Dig-Dug Wheeler?" Max asks as they walk back to Steve (he so did not forget about Steve).

"You wish."

"Dig-Dug?" El says.

"It's an arcade game," Max says.

"Arcade," El repeats.

Max fishes around in her pocket and pulls out a single quarter and lifts it up. El looks at it, curious.

"This, is your ticket to the world." Max says.

"How?"

Max promptly launches into explanation with El as her captive audience.

Mike walks, hand in hand with El, Max's voice in the distance. The sky is gray and it's cold and it might snow any minute now.

There's a new member in the party and it isn't El. He finds he doesn't really mind.

Author's Note:

Mission accomplished! I've noticed I've updated a new part once a month and I just made the deadline for April.

I really hope El and Max become friends in season 3. That'd be awesome. Until then, looks like writing it in will have to do.

I hope you enjoyed! Thank you for reading!